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AVIATION AND TRANSPORTATION SECURITY CONFERENCE AGREEMENT

Today, the House will consider the conference report on S. 1447, the Aviation and Transportation Security Act. House and Senate conferees reached an agreement on an airline security deal yesterday afternoon. This is a major victory for the American people. This measure, which federalizes aviation screening, will go a long way to restoring confidence in airline safety and travel.

Airport Security Screening Force

Under the conference agreement, the federal government would immediately begin taking over control of airport screening functions, and within one year federal law enforcement agents would screen all baggage and passengers, similar to the bipartisan, unanimously-passed Senate bill.

Two years after the federalization of security is complete, the conference agreement permits airport authorities, only if they meet strict federal standards, to opt out of using federal screeners and to contract with private screening companies. The conference agreement also includes a pilot program to evaluate the federalization program in comparison with private security screening. Specifically, under the measure, 5 airports (one in each of the five classifications of airports based on passenger volume) would continue to use private screeners. Auditors would then compare performance between these private security airports and the fully federalized airports.

The measure requires that federal screeners must be citizens of the United States, unlike the Senate bill that required screeners to have held their citizenship for at least five years.

Other Security Measures & Other Provisions

The conference agreement requires that by the end of next year all checked baggage must be screened for explosives. Further, the conference report expands the federal air marshal program. The measure requires that cockpit doors be strengthened and allows pilots to be armed if they are trained and certified, have the approval of their airline, and met DOT standards. It also requires individuals seeking flight instruction to submit to a background check, and an Immigration and Naturalization Service review for foreign students.

The conference agreement puts authority and oversight for aviation security in a new multi-modal section of the Department of Transportation, as proposed by House Democrats.



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To pay for the new security program, the measure imposes a fee on passenger tickets to pay for screener workforce - not to exceed \$5 per one-way ticket.

The conference agreement extends liability protection surrounding the September 11th attacks to airplane manufacturers, the city of New York, the New York Port Authority, and the airport authorities. It does not include House-passed provisions that limited the liability of the private contractors charged with aviation security screening, and provided broad protection for virtually anyone.

This conference agreement is a good deal that scraps the current private screening system and puts in place a comprehensive air security system for all Americans. Democrats have been fighting for more than 8 weeks for a strong measure like this to restore public confidence in airline safety and travel and shore up our economy. Fortunately, we were able to get this done over the objections of a few House Republicans who in their ideological zeal against the federal government have held up and delayed enactment of this historic measure. This is a major victory for the American people, and a crucial beginning to the recovery from the September 11th tragedy.